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ABSTRACT

The theory used in this study predicted that the individual who is "high" on the status characteristics will assume leadership as a function of a diffusion of the "high" evaluation to expectations about other competencies. In general, it was expected that differentially evaluated external status characteristics such as sex, race, and social class may have sufficient effect in determining classroom power and prestige orderings to bear examination. The data came from a controlled survey in which approximately one-hundred fifty low income sixth grade students were observed in their classrooms and administered a questionnaire, once at the beginning of the school year and again at the end of the first semester. The author attempted to find a relationship between an individual's power and prestige in the classroom, and that individual's attitudinal modernity. A positive relationship was found between student verbal initiation and student sense of occupational control, sense of modernism and expectation for success, whereas there is no relationship between student sense of political control and verbal initiation. (Author/BW)

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Attitudinal Modernity, Classroom Power and Status Characteristics: An Investigation

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Researchers investigating attitudinal modernity have characterized it along a number of dimensions. One frequently cited dimension of attitudinal modernity is the individual's sense of control over the organizations which affect his or her life (Kahl, Smith & Inkeles). Such organizations include these associated with school, business and government. Since the school is one of the first organizations with which a person must deal, expectations about one's ability to control organizations may be formed within the schooling experience. We hypothesize that individuals who experience a great deal of control over the academic environment will tend to have high expectations for controlling organizations which will later be encountered in life.

Although the classroom is part of a larger organization, and hence attitudes about one's competence in controlling similar organizations may develop from the classroom experience, the classroom is also a small, task-oriented group. Since this is the case, we may predict that power and prestige, and hence control, will accrue to those who are perceived to have a high degree of competency vis-a-vis the task at hand. Such predictions may be made by generalizing from the Theory of Status Characteristics and Expectation States of Berger, Cohen and Zelditch, (Berger, Zelditch, & Anderson). This theory specifies that under certain conditions, individuals base expectations about other people's competencies

upon externally visible status characteristics, such as age, race or sex. The conditions under which their theory is applicable are that the individuals concerned must be working together on a highly valued, mutually dependent task having differentially evaluated outcomes, and that they must have no other basis for differentiating one another than the status characteristic under question. The theory predicts that the individual who is "high" on the status characteristic in question will assume leadership as a function of a diffusion of the "high" evaluation to expectations about other competencies. The theory says nothing about the allocation of power under conditions in which individuals possessing more than one differentially evaluated status characteristic must work together, such as the classroom situation. Nevertheless, we expected that differentially evaluated external status characteristics such as sex, race and social class may have sufficient effect in determining classroom power and prestige orderings to bear examination.

PROCEDURE

Design

The data comes from a controlled survey in which approximately one-hundred fifty low income sixth grade students were observed in their classrooms and administered a questionnaire, once at the beginning of the school year and again at the end of the first semester. The observations were made during a class discussion of academic materials.

Population

The population of the study was five sixth grade classrooms at two schools in an integrated, partially low income, partially Filipino and Chicano Bay Area suburb.

Measures

Following the practice of investigators of power and prestige in small groups, each person's (students' and teachers') rate of verbal initiation in group discussion was calculated (Cohen). The rate of initiation was used as the measure of the individual's control in the academic discussion. Verbal initiations were coded according to four modified Balesian categories:

1) Performance outputs: statements moving the task toward its goal.

2) Action opportunities: socially distributed chances to perform.

3) Positive evaluation: favorable reactions to another actor's idea.

4) Negative evaluation: negative reaction to another actor's idea.

An individual student's power was considered to be his or her total verbal initiation rate in comparison to the total verbal in initiation rate of the other students and the teacher. Student hand raising was also recorded.

September observations were made with videotape, which was later coded by trained observers. The second set of observations, made at the end of the first term, were made by trained observers in the classroom.

Each individual observed was assigned a verbal initiation rate, which was his or her average initiation across the three time periods, with adjustments made to account for different length of observation periods.

A written questionnaire was used to measure the student's attitudinal modernity, sense of occupational control, sense of political control, expectation for success and to obtain certain background information.

Data was analyzed by the multiple regression subroutine of SPSS, a computer program designed to execute statistical analyses of social science data. Race, sex and social class were entered into the regression as dummy variables.

Attitude scale construction

Although many of the items used on the questionnaire were taken directly or modified from previously used instruments, a complete scale construction procedure was undertaken to verify the scale reliability. The scales and items are reported below:

ATTITUDINAL MODERNITY

Item	Item - Scale Correlation
1) Making plans only makes you unhappy, because the plans are hard to carry through.	.619
2) With things as they are today, a smart person ought to think about today, without worrying about what is going to happen tomorrow.	.749
3) To be happy, you shouldn't want too much; you should just be happy with whatever you have.	.429
4) It doesn't make much difference if the people elect one candidate or another, for nothing will be different.	.690

Kudor-Richardson scale reliability coefficient: .840

POLITICAL CONTROL

Item	Item - Scale Correlation
1) There are some big powerful men in the government who are running the whole thing and they do not care about us ordinary people.	.658
2) My family doesn't have any say about what the government does.	.691
3) I don't think people in the government care much about what my family thanks.	.700
Kudor-Richardson scale reliability coefficient:	.815

OCCUPATIONAL CONTROL

Item	Item - Scale Correlation
1) The only way I'll get a job when I grow up is by finding someone who will help me.	.739
2) I could never get my boss to pay me more. I just have to take what the boss thinks is right.	.733
3) I could never get my boss to pay me more. I will just have to take what the boss thinks is right.	.725

Kudor-Richardson reliability coefficient: .904

Expectation for Success: "I don't have much of a chance to be successful in life."

Change

When considering change, change in any measure is the individual's score at the first observation period substracted from the individual's score at the second period. No aggregate scores are used.

RESULTS

The first question to be answered: Is there a relationship between an individual's power and prestige in the classroom, as measured by his or her verbal initiation rate, and that individual's attitudinal modernity? Table I reports the first-order relationship between student

verbal initiation and the four dimensions of attitudinal modernity under question.

See Table I

There is a positive relationship between student verbal initiation and student sense of occupational control, sense of modernism and expectation for success, whereas there is no relationship between student sense of political control and verbal initiation.

We interpret this to mean that student classroom participation is related to certain dimensions of attitudinal modernity: sense of occupational control, overall modernism and expectation for success. The relationship, however, does not generalize to expectations for success in controlling the government.

We expect, however, that students who are low on any of a number of diffuse status characteristic also tend to contribute less to classroom discussions of academic material than their higher status classmates. To verify this expectation, we will now answer the second question: Does being "low" on the diffuse status characteristics "race", "sex" or "social class" means that student will participate less in classroom discussions of academic material than his or her higher status classmates?

See Table II

TABLE I

Correlations Between Student Total Verbal Initiation And Student Sense of Occupational Control, Political Control, Modernism And Success Orientation (N=127)

	Total Verbal Initiation	
	Beta	R-Square
Dependent Variable Scales		
Sense of Occupational Control	.235*	.055
Sense of Political Control	.028	.001
Sense of Modernism	.198*	.039
Expectation For Success	.207*	.043

*p .05

TABLE II

Regression Results: Estimate Of The Contribution Of Social Class, Race And Sex To Total Student Verbal Initiation Rate. The Numbers Represent Regression Estimates (B). The Numbers In Parentheses Are The Standard Error Of B.

	Total Student Verbal Initiation	
Independent Variables	B	Standard Error B
Social Class ("low")	-.117	(.829)
Race (brown)	-2.508*	(.778)
Sex (girl)	-1.552*	(.685)
R-Square	.093	
F(Total Equation,3/139 df)	4.756	

*p .05

Table II presents the estimate of the contribution of social class, race and sex to total student verbal initiation rate. Social class (being very poor) does not appear to contribute to a lower talking rate, but being "brown" or "girl" means that a student will make from 2.5 to 1.5 fewer comments in a classroom discussion in which the average number of comments made by a student is 3.83. It is clear that if verbal initiation is a reasonable estimate of student power and prestige in the classroom, then the classroom power and prestige order closely resembles that of the external society.

In light of the fact that certain diffuse status characteristics are significant predictors of verbal initiation rate among students in the classroom, the next question to be asked is: Does the relationship between verbal initiation and attitudinal modernity obtain once the effects of the status characteristics are controlled for?

See Table III

From Table III it is evident that external status characteristics so substantially predict verbal initiation, that when their effects are statistically controlled for, the relationship between talking and attitudinal modernity all but disappears. The only condition under which this does not hold is for the case of the individual's sense of occupational control. Apparently, classroom participation and sense of occupational control are related, permitting one to speculate about the

TABLE III

REGRESSION RESULTS--DEPENDENT VARIABLE SCALES, B COEFFICIENTS, (STANDARD ERROR OF B), AND STANDARDIZED REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS (BETA) FOR TOTAL TALKING, SEX, RACE, AND SOCIAL CLASS

	Total Talking		Girl		Brown		Low Social Class		C	R Square
	B	Beta	B	Bet	B	Beta	B	Beta		
Sense of Occupational Control F=3.296 (p .05) df=4/123	.085* (.041)	.187	.028 (.343)	.007	-.660 (.399)	-.152	-.511 (.396)	-.113	8.709	.09
Sense of Political Control F=.979 df=4/123	.006 (.048	.012	.244 (.396)	.056	-.230 (.462)	-.048	-.719 (.457)	-.143	7.510	.03
Modernism F=2.950 (p .05) df=4/123	.084 (.051)	.150	.237 (.423)	.050	-.975* (.494)	-.183	-.422 (.489)	-.076	9.451	.08
Expectation for Success F=4.729 (p .01) df=4/123	.022 (.017)	.116	-.095 (.139)	-.059	-.511* (.162)	-.285	-.171 (.161)	-.091	3.423	.13

*p .01

possibility of changing expectations for occupational control by increasing a students rate of classroom participation.

Because both questionnaire were answered and observations were made twice, once at the beginning of the school year and again half-way through the year, we may examine the relationship between such change in verbal initiation and change in attitude as occurred across that period of time. We wish to answer the question: Will a change in individual power and prestige (verbal initiation) be related to a change in individual sense of control?

See Table IV

Table IV reports the Pearson Correlation coefficients between change in initiation rate and change on the dependent variable scales.

TABLE IV

Pearson Correlation Coefficients: Change In Verbal Initiation And Change In Four Dimensions of Attitudinal Modernity

Dimensions of Attitudinal Modernity	Change In Initiation Rate
Change in sense of occupational control	-.030
Change in sense of political control	.022
Change in attitudinal modernism	.059
Change in expectation for success	-.083

In no case is the change in initiation rate significantly related to change in attitude. This may be explained by the fact that there is so very little change in either the hypothetical antecendent or consequent variable: verbal initiation or sense of control. In no case is the mean change on any of these variables significantly different from zero.

Another interpretation of the lack of relationship between change in power and prestige in the classroom and change in sense of control may be that the external status characteristics are so powerful that they predict both change in power and prestige in the classroom and change in attitude. The following table indicates the degree of the relationship between certain external status characteristics and individual change in power and prestige in the classroom:

See Table V

TABLE V

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Status Characteristics And Change In Verbal Initiation Rate

External Status Characteristic	Change In Verbal Initiation
Race (brown)	-.118*
Sex (female)	-.030
Social class (low)	-.184*

*p .05

Both race and social class appear to have relatively high correlations with change in power and prestige in the classroom, such that being either "brown" or from a "lower social class" background contributes negatively to change in classroom initiation rate across time.

Controlling statistically for external status characteristics, we may examine the contribution of change in classroom power and prestige to change in sense of control. The following table presents the Beta weights of verbal initiation, race, sex and social class, as they relate to change in sense of efficacy.

See Table VI

It is clear that even controlling for the contribution of external status characteristics to change in verbal initiation, change in verbal initiation rate is not significantly related to change in sense of control. It is interesting to note, however, the relationship of external status characteristics to change in sense of control. Race is significantly and negatively related to change in sense of occupational control; overall modernism and expectation for success; social class is significantly and negatively related to change in sense of political control, whereas it is significantly and positively related to change in expectation for success. Sex is not ignificantly related to change on any dimension of sense of control.

TABLE VI

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN CHANGE IN VERBAL INITIATION AND CHANGE IN FOUR DIMENSIONS OF ATTITUDINAL MODERNITY, CONTROLLING FOR THE EFFECTS OF RACE, SEX AND SOCIAL CLASS

	Change in Verbal Initiation	Race (Brown)	Sex (Girl)	Social Class (Low)
Change in Sense of Occupational Control	-.058	-.157*	-.054	-.043
Change in Sense of Political Control	-.009	.007	-.087	-.158*
Change in Attitudinal Modernity	.040	-.152*	-.012	-.002
Change in Expectation for Success	-.062	-.181*	.021	.228*

* p .05

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Verbal Initiation and Sense of Control

Tables I and III indicate the extent to which power and prestige in the classroom is related to sense of control. The dimension of control most associated with verbal initiation is sense of occupational control. This is a measure of the individual's belief that he or she will be able to obtain and succeed at a job of his or her own choosing. The second dimension of control which correlates highly with verbal initiation is expectation for success in life. Thisis the attitude Coleman (1966) found that was so significant in predicting school success among minority children. The dimension of control which next strongly relates to verbal initiation is attitudinal modernity; this dimension measures the degree to which the individual feels able to control his own destiny. Sense of control over the government does not relate at all to verbal initiation.

Verbal Initiation, Status Characteristics and Sense of Control

Statistically controlling for the effects of three status characteristics reduces the significance of the relationship between verbal initiation and the various dimensions of attitudinal modernity. Sense of occupational control, however, is related to rate of verbal initiation. It may be that the student who participates greatly in the classroom is also the student who feels that school is relevant for his or her future career, and, hence, he or she is already efficacious about work. On the other hand, it may be that for the lower class child,

participation gives a strong sense of control and hence changes his or her attitudes. . . .

Possible Treatment

The fact that 1) brown children and girls are low in classroom participation, and 2) brown children also feel less modern and efficacious than whites, and that 3) girls feel less in control of their success chances is a problem which must be faced by the schools. Perhaps the attitudes which these student bring to school prevent them from participating and keep them low in classroom power and prestige. On the other hand, perhaps the fact that they are not encouraged to participate reinforces their attitudes. There are ways in which students may be encouraged to participate more; Rudie Tretten changed the power and prestige order in groups of black students to give more power to students by having the teacher remove himself from the role of the authority. Terry Deal found that by assigning the role of authority to female students, he was able to climinate the effect of the status characteristic "age" in an all female group; the adult women were willing to listen to their younger group members, and the power and prestige order changed away from age dominance to equal status interaction. Other interventions giving low status boys greater competence than their upper status peers have altered the power and prestige order in mixed racial groups and produced equal status interaction (Cohen).

SUMMARY

If the classroom merely replicates the external society, then it

is not doing its job of providing an equal educational environment for all students. We appreciate that some students come to school with more competencies than others, but do not believe that systematically "brown" students and girls have less to contribute to classroom discussions than "white" students and boys. Rather, it appears to be the case that values held in the society, which attribute to "whites" and boys higher value than "browns" or girls set the stage for this imbalanced classroom situation. That this system of values should be allowed to permeate the classroom, and not counteracted, only reaffirms the fact that simple integration---bringing together or individuals who may be differentially evaluated--is not the solution to stratification; expectations based on beliefs about these differences allow stratification to occur within the classroom, as within the society.

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